



The Dragons of Sundsvall. Photo by JT Blatty. [↗](#)

The 9th Annual Sundsvall Dragon Parade Summer Art Street Exhibition in Sweden

By [JT Blatty](#)

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In Sundsvall, a city in northern Sweden, walk outside your hotel during the summer time and be greeted by a life-sized colorful dragon, standing proudly on a large wooden platform like a giant trophy.

Continue to stroll along and you'll run into another dragon scaling vertically along the facade of a building. Ten seconds later you'll be looking into the eyes of a winged dragon suspended high in the air. It's the Sundsvall Dragon Parade

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Fire of 1888 Turns the Wooden City to Stone

1888 marked the third and most devastating fire for the one-time city of Sundsvall, leaving 9,000 of 11,000 without a home in less than 9 hours. But learning from previous disastrous fires, the people were prepared by properly insuring their homes, and more importantly, they had created a detailed plan for the rebuilding of the city.

Sundsvall would no longer be the flammable wooden city: under the plan's building ordinances, the new town would be constructed entirely from stone. But as a tragic past cannot be forgotten, superstition still plagued the Sundsvallers, and in a final gesture to protect their homes from the curse of fire, they placed dragon figurines on their rooftops.

Dragons in the City

The dragon has since become the symbol of Sundsvall, representing their devastating past and triumphant move forward from the ashes. From high school mascots to store names, their presence can be found everywhere in the city.

But the most noticeable dragons are those of the Annual Dragon Parade: the dragon in the bathtub, the dragon pulling a camping trailer, the dragon with a copy of *Pippi Longstocking* snug between its jaws, or the female Terminator dragon wearing lipstick. The list goes on.

2009 Summer Art Exhibition

May 9th of this year marked the opening ceremony for Sundsvall's 9th annual festival. Local business owners placed their dragons in the streets for the summer art exhibition, each designed and hand painted by local artists. Until July 31st, individuals have the opportunity to go on a "Dragon Walk" throughout the city and place a vote for their favorite critter.

But besides the intricate colors and unique expression found in each of the dragons, there was something else much more endearing about the festival, and more so about the city of Sundsvall.

Anna Broman, tour guide for Sundsvall's [Uppliv Mer Tour Group](#) says, "The idea of the dragons is to show creativity and get people in town to be proud of it."

This statement is nothing short of reality: the many onlookers strolling through the streets on their "Dragon Walk" were locals of the city.

Such a unique and beautiful city like this deserves to draw more visitors. The Dragon Parade was only one golden coin in an extremely heavy treasure chest.



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